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ABSTRACT

The differential effects of individual versus group treatment on career indecision and general indecisiveness among career counseling clients were investigated. Data were obtained from 24 career-undecided students seeking vocational counseling through the counseling center of a midwestern state university. Twelve subjects participated in the group counseling approach, and 12 received individual counseling. The level of career indecision was assessed by Osipow's Career Decision Scale; the level of general indecisiveness was assessed by an eight-item scale derived from Salamone. Results of a repeated measures split-plot factorial multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) test and an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model found that both treatments led to client gains but that neither was better than the other on the two process measurements. (Two tables are appended). (Author/YLB)

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An Investigation of the Differential Effects of Group Versus Individual Treatment on Vocational Indecision and Indecisiveness

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Running Head: DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CAREER INDECISION

Abstract

The differential effects of individual versus group treatments on career indecision and general indecisiveness among career counseling clients were investigated. The level of career indecision was assessed by Osipow's Career Decision Scale and the level of general indecisiveness was assessed by an eight-item scale derived from Salamone. The results of a repeated measures split-plot factorial multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) test and an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) model found that both treatments led to client gains but that neither was better than the other on the two process measurements. The discussion focused on the need to evaluate alternative treatments to determine their potential interaction with differing subtypes of vocationally uncertain students.

The value of specific counseling interventions in the career decision-making process needs clarification and validation through research efforts. Fretz (1981) emphasized the need to evaluate the effectiveness of career interventions by examining the relationship of client attributes, treatment parameters, and outcomes. We fully concur with this position. We also recognize, as did Fretz, that because the outcome is related to client attributes and treatment interaction, there must be a diagnostic scheme to which allows assignment of clients with specific attributes to specific treatment group.

Garfield (1977) reviewed some of the vocational research studies which involved attribute treatment interactions. However, at that time little work had been done showing the relationship of client attribute and treatment mode in vocational counseling. In his survey, Fretz (1981) found only three to report. He believed that the paucity of research effort was due to need for a diagnostic system to be used as a basis for assigning clients to different interventions. Much of that has changed recently. There are now available several career diagnostic instruments.

Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, and Koschier (1976) and Harren (1979) have published career diagnostic instruments. Super, Thompson, Lindiman, Jordaan, and Myers (1981) have published an instrument that assesses this dimension along with vocational interests and abilities. These instruments may yield measures of client characteristics which interact with the parameters of treatment.

Hartman and Fuqua (1982, 1983) have done extensive investigation with the Career Decision Scale. Fuqua & Hartman (1983A, 1983B), and Hartman

and Hartman (1982) have conducted investigations with a considerable heuristic effect. They have shown that the Career Decision Scale (1976) has concurrent and predictive validity and a factor structure which enable its use as a career diagnostic instrument. In addition, Cooper, Fuqua, and Hartman (1982) found relationships between a brief measure of Trait Indecisiveness and several interpersonal characteristics.

Van Matre and Cooper (in press) speculated that the two major dimensions of career decision-making difficulty may be indecision and indecisiveness and conceptualized a diagnostic system on that basis. This diagnostic system utilized these two major orthogonal dimensions to represent four distinct subtypes of vocational client attributes as described in Van Matre and Cooper (in press). However, it must be established that the instruments provide for a measurement of the interaction between client attributes and type of treatment. This requires that an intervention be devised which is both instructional and therapeutic, i.e., which has parameters for both general indecisiveness and career indecision.

The goal of the present study was to investigate the effects of individual versus group interventions on general indecisiveness and career indecision. The treatment parameters of group versus individual were selected to specifically test the potential advantages of group member interaction on the vocational decision-making process.

Method

Subjects

Data was obtained from 24 career undecided students seeking vocational counseling through the counseling center of a mid-western state university

which emphasized science and engineering. The mean age of the sample was 20 years with 15 males and 9 females. The 12 subjects who participated in the group counseling approach and the 12 subjects who received individual counseling were matched on level of 'career certainty' as measured by the first two items on the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1978). Matched subjects scored within 1 point of the possible 8 point range. Assignment to treatment was based on individual request for help and response to notices about the career exploration group. T-test comparisons found the groups to be equivalent at entry on the amount of career indecision ($t(22) = 1.25$, $p = .23$) but different on the level of general indecisiveness ($t(22) = 2.90$, $p = .01$).

Procedures

The individual counseling participants received three sessions. During the first session, their vocational decision-making history and current status were assessed. This was followed by the development of a personal profile which included information on the client's geographical and lifestyle preferences, skill strengths, desired job characteristics, and level of education or training desired. The clients then completed the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory (SCII), the Career Decision Scale (Osipow, 1976), and a General Decisiveness Scale (Van Matre & Cooper, in press) The second session started with a brief review of the client's status and personal profile information followed by an explanation of career decision-making as a developmental process which involves self-assessment, finding out about the world of work, and discussing feelings and thoughts about the decision process. The clients were then referred to standard information sources on the world of work. During the last session, the

therapist interpreted the results of the SCII to the client who generated a list of potential occupational choices based upon the test information and their research on careers during the preceding week. The client was then referred to additional resources in his specific areas of interest with an encouragement to interview people in that field. In addition, a review of the client's progress was made with an invitation to continue counseling should it be needed. The session ended with the post-testing of career indecision and general indecisiveness measures.

The group participants were exposed to essentially the same treatment with the exception of extensive use of group interaction and sharing of information throughout the sessions.

Measures

The Career Decision Scale (CDS) was developed by Osipow, et al. (1976) to assess a given client's level of career indecision. The scale is composed of 18 items which are self-rated on a four-point Likert scale of agreement to the item statement. Items 1 and 2 indicate certainty of choice of career and school major with higher scores suggesting greater certainty. These items are negatively correlated with the scores from items 3 through 18 whose sum jointly assess the level of career indecision.

The overall test-retest reliability of the CDS is .90 with the majority of item correlations falling between the .60 and .70 range. Additionally, several validity studies have been conducted. These found that vocational counseling interventions led to lower post-test scores for the treatment groups than for control groups (Osipow, Cariny & Barak, 1976). The CDS appears to have adequate validity in

its sensitivity to showing relevant changes after treatment, its relationship to other career scales, and its capacity to differentiate career decided and undecided group appropriately.

The General Decisiveness Scale (Van Matre & Cooper, in press) of a set of eight items which Salomone (1982) considered typical decision-making characteristics of people having trouble making career choices. The items, which are presented below, were rated by the participants on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

1. I find it difficult to make a decision even after collecting information and talking to others.
2. I feel a lot of frustration and uncertainty in making personal-vocational decisions.
3. I like to get specific suggestions from others, but usually do not act on this advice.
4. I often ask my parents for help when I have an emotional problem.
5. I seem to not feel good about myself much of the time.
6. Situations and other people exercise a great deal of influence over my life.
7. I would like to change some of my patterns of behavior but find it difficult to do so.
8. I often feel helpless in dealing with unpleasant situations.

Each participants' score was calculated as the sum of their level of agreement with the item statements such that higher scores represent greater general indecisiveness.

Analysis

The model used to analyze the data was a repeated measures split-plot factorial design with the individual versus group clients as the between-subjects variable and pre- and post-testing of the career indecision and general indecisiveness measures as the within-subjects factor. This model was employed because of the doubly multivariate situation of multiple measures taken at repeated times and the potential confounding of subjects x treatments. The design controls subject error statistically by having each subject serve as his or her own control.

Since the level of general decisiveness differed in the two treatments at pre-testing, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was also run to examine the influence of this factor on treatment gains.

Results

The results of the repeated measures multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) can be viewed in either multivariate or univariate terms. Since Bartlett's test of Sphericity was non-significant for the between factor ($B(1) = 1.29$, $p = .26$) and the within factor ($B(1) = 1.72$, $p = .19$), the univariate test results are appropriate. These are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The effect of the time factor was significant indicating that most subjects reduced their career indecision and indecisiveness ($F(1, 22) = 3.96$, $p = .06$ and $F(1, 22) = 9.80$, $p = .005$, respectively). Further, the effect of the treatment factor was significant indicating

that the participants in the two groups were not equivalent. Specifically, the level of general decisiveness differed significantly between the types of treatment across pre- and post-testing ($F(1, 22) = 7.73$, $p = .01$), while ~~both~~ career indecision was not ~~and general indecisiveness changed due to treatment~~. The results of the type of treatment by time analysis were not significant (Avg $F(2, 44) = 1.21$, $p = .31$) so an overall pre-post difference by type of treatment was not supported.

An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) using the initial level of general decisiveness as the covariate and change in career indecision by type of treatment as the dependent measure was also conducted. The results are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Neither general decisiveness (as the covariate) nor type of treatment (as the main effect) were significant. Further, the F-ratio of general decisiveness with the change in vocational indecision was very low ($F(1, 22) = .002$, $p = .96$) supporting the orthoganality of these dimensions.

Discussion

The results of this study failed to support any differential effects of individual versus group treatment on the measures of career indecision and general indecisiveness. This lack of difference probably means that individual versus group approaches are not a significant factor in the specific intervention of clients with high career indecision and general indecisiveness. Some alternative reasons for the similarity of treatment effects might be the small size of the sample or the limited amount of time between pre- and post-testing. It may be that a specific focus on the effective

characteristics connected with the career decision process and/or the teaching of decision-making skills would have more impact.

Studies contrasting this type of intervention against the conventional assessment and vocational information approach might be productive. In addition, the inclusion of a delayed follow-up measurement would allow for further individual exploration of career options generated by the counseling process and could include vocational decision outcome measurements as well as the process indices used in this study.

The use of the general decisiveness scale as an important process measurement in career decision-making appears to be supported by the study as both treatment groups improved significantly on this scale. In addition, the participants' scores on the general decisiveness scale were virtually uncorrelated with changes in career indecision. This is supportive of the orthoganality of this dimension as proposed by Van Matre and Cooper (in press). However, the general decisiveness scale needs to be further developed. Specifically, reliability and validity studies need to be continued. The scale may prove to be a useful component of an assessment battery which identifies the important subgroups of vocationally uncertain clients.

With adequate instruments for placing individuals in diagnostic categories, the differential effects of several treatment variables may be determined by subtype within the diagnostic system. Other client attributes concommittant with career decision and general decisiveness may be investigated and our knowledge of the career development process expanded.

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Author Notes

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Table 1

Summary of Univariate Analysis Investigating Differential Effects of Individual Versus Group Greatments of Career Indecision and General Indecisiveness

Effect	Variable	df	F	p
Treatment	(Avg)	2, 44	4.02	.03
	Career Indecision	1, 22	.38	.54
	General Indecisiveness	1, 22	7.73	.01**
Time	(Avg)	2, 44	5.35	.01**
	Career Indecision	1, 22	3.96	.06
	General Indecisiveness	1, 22	9.80	.01**
Treatment by Time	(Avg)	2, 44	1.21	.31
	Career Indecision	1, 22	1.43	.25
	General Indecisiveness	1, 22	.51	.48

* p less than .05 ** p less than .01

Table 2

Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Career Indecision with General Decisiveness as the Covariate x Type of Treatment

Source	df	F	p
Covariate (general decisiveness)	1	.002	.96
Treatment (individual vs. group)	1	1.809	.19